Power P*p (with a built-in vibrator)

The Boyfriends
Central London Poly

"LaLaLaLaLaLaaah!!!"

That's how the Boyfriends second number began.

"LaLaLaLaLaLaLaLaaah!!!"

Four bright smiles and Power Pop fresh enthusiasm. One on-beat drummer crossing his kit to the floor tom tom; one bouncing bubbling bass player, a stand-up organist looking like Andy Fairweather-Low and, of course, that tall, skeletal figure centre-stage cutting neat slices of rhythm guitar as sharp as the creases in his pinkgrey suit three-piece suit. Introducing Pat Collier and his Boyfriends with a real 1978 flourish.

Imagine Blondie without Debbie Harry (*Do we really have to? — Ed*) or Elvis' Attractions without the goats and monkeys, guilt and revenge. Take a band like those two, complete with bastardised classical themes on an organ that wheezes like it's still 1965; give 'em songs with titles like 'Pony Tail', 'Romance', 'Shy Boy', 'I'm In Love' and lyrics like the words you mumble in your loved-one's ear as you huddle in the dark waiting for the last bus home... and you should be getting a clan taste of the Boyfriends without a safety pin or a vibrating machine within reach.

Mind you, Pat Collier's old Vibrators' anthem, 'We Vibrate', was still in the set and, Stones-like as the melody of that one is, so Stones-like was its beat. The Boyfriends were certainly anything but wimps when it came to rocking hard. And, for a man better known as a bass player, Collier's massive one note lead break on '4875' was a real gut wrencher.

But the Boyfriends' real strength lay in close arrangements that pushed and stabbed, ebbed and flowed, exploded into myriads of bright, funtime hooks and then — Bap Bap — ended right on cue. And, on top of those great Powerpoppers I've already mentioned, the ace up the Boyfriends' sleeve was the slow 'Last Bus Home', saved for the encore. Another 'Twenty Four Hours From Muswell 'Ill' if ever I heard one.

Yet the Boyfriends were not without their problems. It might have been full marks for image — grey suits, button-down shirts, ties and chelsea boots — and the sound was pretty clean too. But Pat Collier's new project has been plagued in the bass playing department. Buster Crabbe's Neil Brockbank was depping for the night at Central London Poly, and a creditable job he did too. But he and drummer Howard Osborne seemed to have difficulty hitting it off at times, while Brockbank's lack of vocals left the harmonies of Collier and organist Chris Smith sounding just a little thin on top.

But, it's early days yet, even though this Poly gig was running with record company faces. 1978 looks like it'll be a good year for the Boyfriends and, if it continues like this, a great year for Power Pop.

CHAS DE WHALLEY

Art Attax
The Vortex

YOU LOVE me, and I'll love you, or I won't love you at all. When you've been assured of a place on the guest list (you think I'd *pay* to see this punk rubbish?), when you've met the lead singer of the Art Attax (sigh) only two hours before the Grand Finale (this was the group's last gig, fans), when you get to the bottom — uh, Vortex and can't get in because you have quote/unquote: 'only ever put the club down'. Well, what do you do? write a nice review??

Yeah, I'll write them a story/ask them forgive all our sins... Thought the drinks were great, really cheap; and the audience entertaining — as far as entertainment is allowed in gangsterland. Go ahead and scream, mister, I scream LOUDER.

The Art Attax came on stage, sang two numbers, stopped and cried for a (surrogate) masochist willing to be raped by a plastic banana. Nobody was impressed... so they played 'Where Did Our Love Go' on a portable Dansette at 33rpm while everyone clapped. The coup d'etat was Savage Pencil drawing his own cartoon with an 8" bowie knife; wonderfully graphic and sub-lime in stereo. I passed out — So-oo, over to Linda, the ligging Profette: "Blimey, it turned into 'War and peace'!" The stage was infiltrated by Motors drummers and guitarists, plebs posing as Johnny Rotten and some berk called Dave Fudger. I *think* the song was 'Twist and Shout' —"

Farewell is a lonely word — or a godalmighty mess.

JANE SUCK

JENNY DARREN: the new Dusty Springfield she isn't

Jenny Darren
Dingwalls.

NOW, THEY say Jenny Darren has a good voice and I'm perfectly prepared to believe them. Trouble is, the night I saw her at Dingwalls she seemed to spend her time shouting. To be perfectly honest, a more raucous noise I would not wish to hear at any time of the day or night.

Still, maybe she could claim a few extenuating circumstances. The fog and multiple pile-ups on the M1 had turned Darren's routine trip from Manchester to a twelve-hour nightmare. By the time she took the stage, hardly a soundcheck later, her nerves, and those of her band, must have been well frayed.

Nevertheless, if the support group Samson left much to be desired Jenny Darren's outfit were little better. Almost one long cliché from beginning to end, the five-piece backing band rolled out the obligatory heavy rock cum goodtime funk beat Dada and Vinegar Joe were still 'ongoing concerns'. In front of them the silver streaked Jenny Darren bumped and grind-ed like a trouper, flashing her thighs through tight white tassels and fringes.

Despite her frequent exhortations to all the sexy men in the audience (sic) her renditions of Seventies' standards like Rick Derringer's 'Rock And Roll Hoochie Coo' and Led Zep's 'Stairway To Heaven' offered no invitation for a spell in the cold showers. Her own material, like 'City Lights' (from the DJM album of the same name) sounded ordinary in the extreme. A dull, mechanical, cranking mixture of bad Janis Joplin and worse whitefunk.

I failed to see why she bothered. She seemed to have fallen into the trap that has ensnared every female rock singer since the late J.J. She was trying to be as upfront and overbearing as the run of the mill male shouter. Who needs it when there's a gaping hole these days for a new Dusty Springfield or, at the least, a new Billie Davis?

Very few female voices have the right edge for hard rock, that's my opinion. It may be chauvinistic . . . but you only have to hear Jenny Darren to realise the truth behind the lies.

CHAS DE WHALLEY

Slaughter and the Dogs
Marquee

SLAUGHTER AND the Dogs brought madness (wiv a capital M) to the Marquee on Monday night. Manchester's own Sex Pistols whipped the rabid crowd into a muderous earthquake of fun hard to believe in the jaded, would-be pop year '78. Loonies, Lancastrians and punks drowned together in a sewer of sweat, gob and beer. Who needs a Pistols alibi now.... Slaughter will come TO YOU.

The evening began badly with an old bull and bush punk singalong, outstanding in its 'oribbleness was a cheery version of 'Anachy', chanted and moaned like a good Crossroads script.

A whoop of relief greeted the Dogs' arrival on stage. Any attempt at a detached view of the gig was impossible in the middle of a crowd that was about to start nuttin' the ceiling — which the Dogs had us doing after the first few manic crashes of sound. The Dogs play pure punk for Now headcases.

The singer ranged the stage jumping on and of amps, sometimes spitting back at the audience. The man certainly is different, he's got longish hair And he urges the audience to gob. Very untrendy.

He sang/bellowed with the deranged grin of a wide-boy fourth former who'd just had his hand up the biology teacher's skirt. Beneath him, guitarist Mike Rossie pogoed wide legged across the stage like a pendulum, all the while mental guitar heroing as if on short-life batteries. A kind of Ramone villiage idiot bass player and the drummer (sadly obscured by mists of talc) kept our straight jackets popping all night.

The set progressed at a motorway madness pace to the obvious goal of the band's single, 'Bootboys'. Titles of the songs became blurred and almost irrelevant, only the genuine excitement of the band and the fans really mattering. By the time the highlight of the show was reached people were trying with dervish fervour to flick their heads from their necks. The black hole has seldom seen the like.

This is the first time that I have seen the Dogs and they seemed totally out of control. The perfect nightmare. Maybe even the perfect group to fill the vacuum that the big boys (Clash, Pistols) seem to be leaving.

Lock that guy from the Stones up if you like. As long as you keep letting Slaughter and the Dogs out at night.

GEORGE SMITH

Village of the (Amster) damned

A HELL's Angel scuffles with roadies onstage . . . but the show must go on.

999
Amsterdam

DID THE fiddlers play when the Christians were fed to the lions in Ancient Rome? I dunno. But 999 had the dubious pleasure of providing the soundtrack to some particularly nasty ultraviolence when they played Amsterdam's notorious El Paradiso club last week.

The London-based band was poised to spring a great evening of hard Power Pop upon the seething and sympathetic Dutch when the local chapter of Hell's Angels decided that they should star in the evening's movie. They started beating the hell out of each other, then they started on the crowd and even hammered a few policemen before the night was through. Knives flashed in the foyer, bottles smashed backstage (such are the ugly facts of life surrounding every 'punk' gig in Amsterdam). As a piece of social realism cut with street-corner drama, 999's debut in the city of canals was nothing short of stunning. But as a gig it was a disaster.

Which was a terrible pity. Although the atmosphere was tense from the start, 999's first three numbers promised a dynamite set, plagued by the first of many fights and pulled plugs. They left the stage but bravely reappeared some ten minutes later and made a courageous attempt to salvage the gig.

They did all they could have done. Despite drama as one particular drunken Angel tried, physically, to join the band, they hammered out their old punk favourites like 'Nasty Nasty', 'Quite Disappointing' and 'I'm Alive', turning the Paradiso into a blitz of sound and fury, light and colour with Nick Cash's high strangled voice and Guy Days' exceptionally powerful lead guitar touching off the blaze.

But most exciting of all, 999's new material, like the latest single, 'Emergency' and 'Crazy' and 'My Over-reaction', scheduled for their debut album, suggested that an extra, melodic dimension has crept into their songwriting. A dimension that should not only sell them records, but should also broaden their appeal to rock fans of all denominations.

It was such a pity that such needless violence prevented them from playing at their very best and that the kids of Amsterdam were denied the opportunity of seeing one of Britain's better young bands.

CHAS DE WHALLEY